

Emotional regulation and sensory processing

The Working Together Team

Aims

- To explore the development of emotional recognition and self-regulation
- To know what Sensory Processing & Integration means and understand how differences in these can impact a CYP's capacity in school
- To understand the purpose of a sensory circuit ***approach*** and develop confidence in using this effectively in school.



What is an 'emotion'?

What is the definition of an emotion?

An emotion is an internal sensation which is caused by the situation that you are in and / or the people you are with.

Try and 'explain' the emotion of

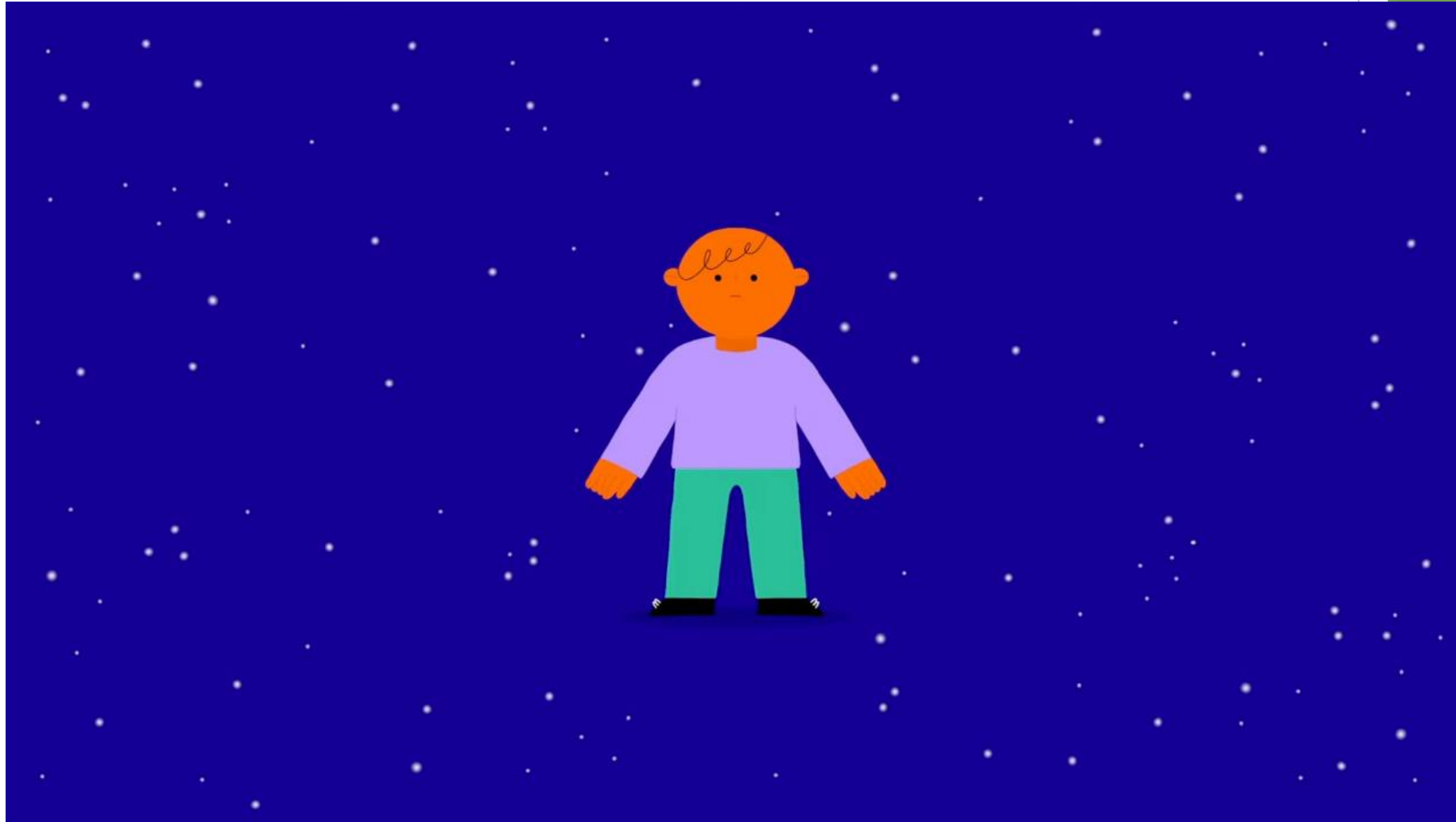
Disappointed

Exasperated

Safe



Worries



Neurodiverse people don't lack emotions but often have difficulty identifying them.

Some neurodiverse people are often very good at analytical problem solving and expressing, as well as experiencing their emotions differently, it is not the case that they lack emotions altogether.

In fact, a very large proportion of neurodiverse individuals (about a half, although estimates vary) suffer from symptoms of anxiety and depression that significantly compromise their quality of life. Unfortunately, very little is still known about the underlying causes of these difficulties or about how best to alleviate them.

There are a number of factors that might contribute to high levels of anxiety in autistic people. One of these factors seems to be the difficulty that many experience is in identifying and describing their own emotions – a phenomenon known as *alexithymia*.

STRENGTH & SUPPORT to DEVELOP – they will struggle to just ‘pick it up as they go along’.



Identify the emotion...

Physical 1

Clenched fists
Heart thumping
Feeling hot
Red face
Clenched jaw
Upset stomach
Shaking
Headache
Tearful

Anger

Physical 2

Heart beats faster, slower,
louder, or skips
Tension in body
Sweaty hands
Urge to run away
Upset stomach/'butterflies'
Hard to breathe
Blushing
Feel lightheaded or dizzy
Heaviness in the chest

Anxiety

Physical 3

Heart beats faster, louder,
thumping
Agitation, can't sit still
Blushing
Feel lightheaded
Shaking
Tearful/cry
'Butterflies' in tummy
Breathless

Anxiety/Excited



Stages of emotional development

STEP 1 - Recognise

We can identify an emotion in ourselves

Only then can we identify the emotions in others

NAME IT TO TAME IT

We're beginning to build a bank of emotional literacy

STEP 2 - Express

We *begin* to understand how emotions work.

Why we might be experiencing them = **identify some triggers**

When we are **not aware** of how we are feeling, we are **more likely to react without thinking** = **Fight Flight Freeze**

Action/Thought = Reaction = Consequences

STEP 3 - Manage

We can **develop & use skills** that help us to **manage our responses**

REMEMBER!!!

Your Fight Flight Freeze is active for safety reasons

THINK!

Does the reaction fit the situation?

Baseline Emotional Development

Emotional understanding and self-awareness													
1. Understanding and expressing own emotions							Term 1						
1.1 Expresses a range of emotions							Date	Baseline	NYD	D	E	G	
×	· Intentionally communicates their emotions to others												
×	· Expresses emotions in keeping with the situation												
×	· Expresses emotions in proportion to the situation												
×	· Adapts expression of emotions to suit situation / audience												
1.2 Identifies own emotions							Date	Baseline	NYD	D	E	G	
×	· Identifies simple emotions in relation to self eg. sad / happy, angry / afraid												
×	· Identifies more complex emotions in relation to self												
×	· Identifies physical feelings related to emotions												
×	· Identifies degrees of feelings within an emotion												
1.3 Identifies cause of emotion							Date	Baseline	NYD	D	E	G	
×	· Makes connection between an emotion and what has caused it												
×	· Knows what usually / typically makes them feel positive emotions												
×	· Knows what usually / typically makes them feel negative emotions												
×	· Predicts likely emotional responses to a given situation												
×	· Reflects on previous experiences of emotions and can identify emotions linked to situations / events												
×	· Knows that emotions can be linked to physical / hormonal changes												
×	· Recognises when their emotional state is changing												



Impact on the development of those skills.

“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

HAIM GINOTT



EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotional regulation *is not* about trying to push away or stop experiencing uncomfortable emotions!

Remember the Flight, fight, Freeze response is necessary!

Regulation begins by reassuring our children and young people that *it's ok to feel the way you feel*, these are all 'normal' feelings.

Regulation focuses on **DEVELOPING AND USING SKILLS THAT HELP MANAGE OUR RESPONSES**



THERE WAS NO TRIGGER!

If you're processing what happened that morning at home (anxiety about coming to school, frustration because you didn't finish your computer level before leaving, hunger because you didn't have your usual breakfast) but it takes you 3 hours to process, then at 11am you may lash out = MELTDOWN!

Delayed Processing



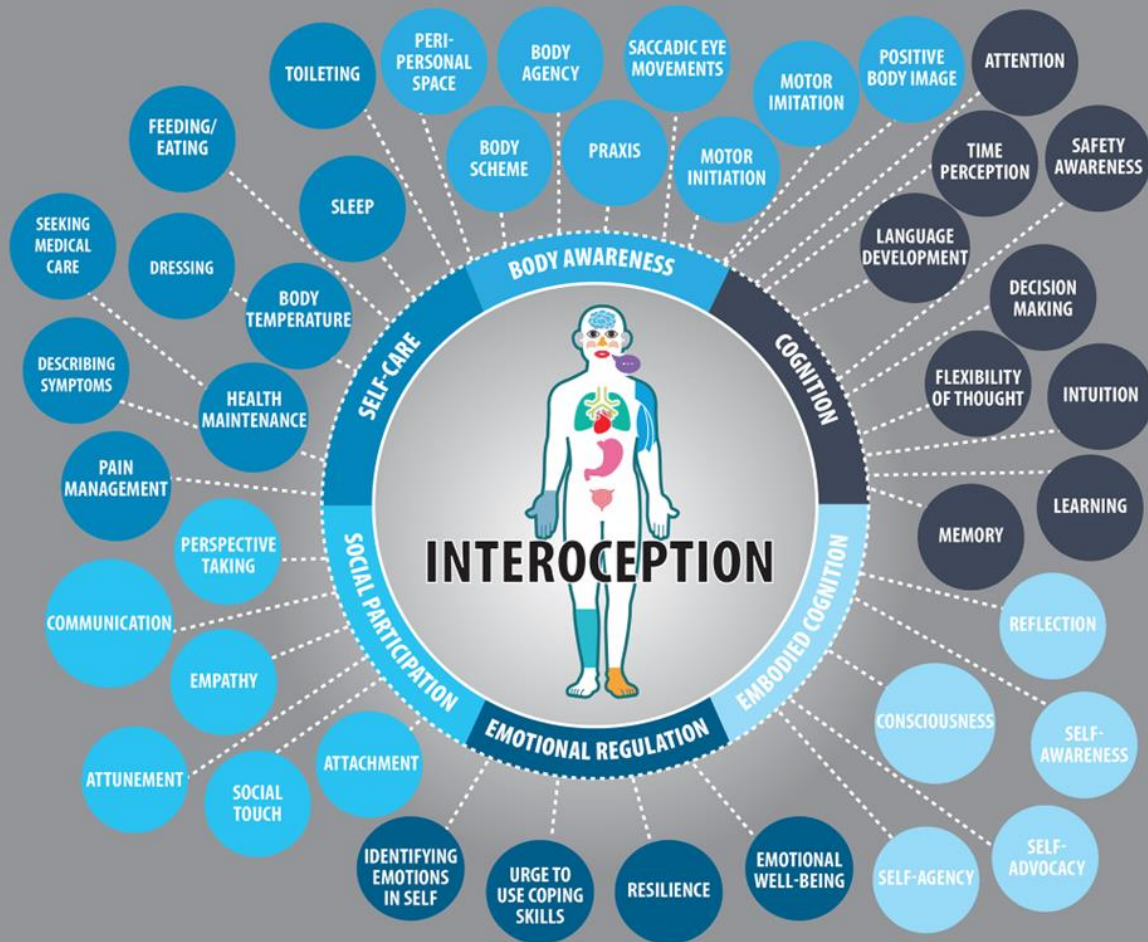
THERE WAS NO TRIGGER!



THE VAST INFLUENCE OF INTEROCEPTION

Interoception is a sense that connects us with our internal body sensations such as heart rate, and muscle tension.

Research shows that interoception has a far-reaching influence on many different aspects of life.

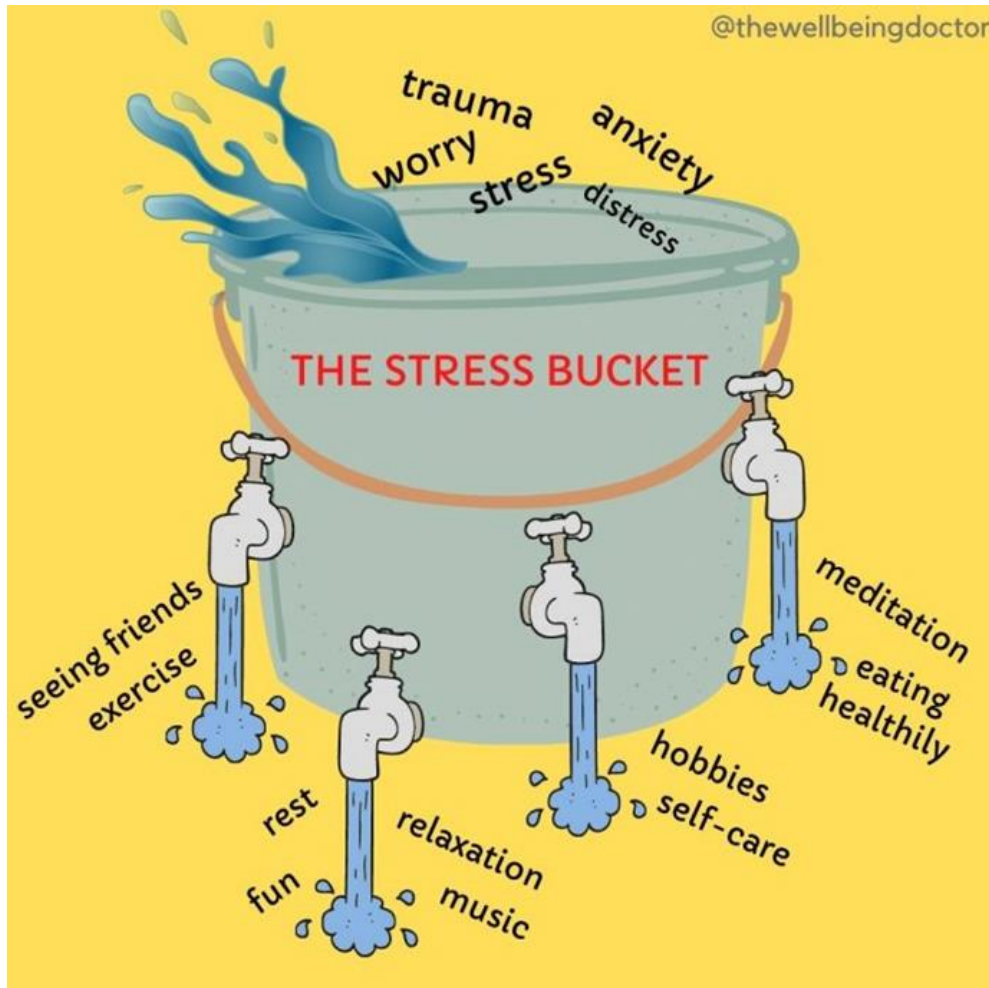


Interoception is the ability to detect and attend to internal bodily sensations. It helps a pupil to understand what is going on inside of their body and to recognise the feelings associated with hunger, thirst, feeling hot or cold, fatigue tired, or a having full bladder.

If they are unable to recognise these signals then they don't recognise the need to remove clothing when they are hot, put it on when they are cold. They may not recognise that they need to go to the toilet and therefore may have accidents.



What are you thinking about?’



5

I can't stand this and ready to explode.

I want to hit someone, something, or throw something. I need an adult to help me go to a safe place so I can calm down.



4

I am getting too angry.

My brain isn't working clearly. I might say or do something I will be sorry for later. I need to go to my safe place to calm down.



3

I am getting really irritated.

I need to walk away from a bad situation. I will tell my teacher that I need a break.



2

I am doing OK.

I'm not pleased, but I'm not upset. I can stay where I am and keep working. I can control my anger by myself.



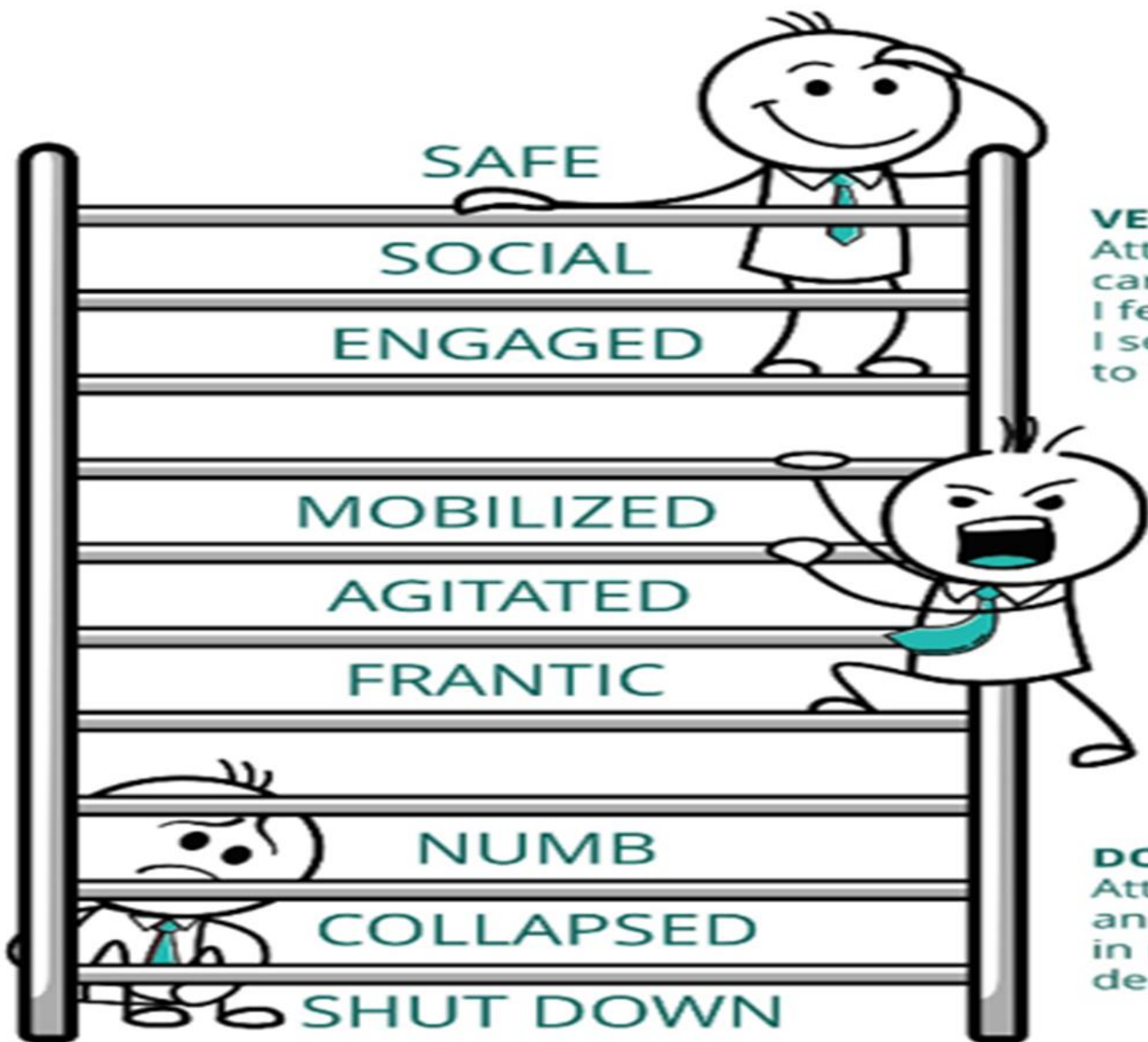
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I am doing great.

I feel good about myself and about what is going on around me.



AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM AS A LADDER



VENTRAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

Attitude: "I am feeling at ease and can manage whatever comes my way. I feel empowered and connected. I see the "big picture" and connect to the world and people in it."

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

Attitude: "I am getting overwhelmed and having hard time keeping up. I feel anxious and irritated. The world seems dangerous, chaotic and unfriendly."

DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

Attitude: "I am buried under a huge load and I cannot get out. I am alone in my despair. The world is empty, dead and dark."

Regulating ...

Window of tolerance



Energy accounting

How is your emotional battery energy today?



Energy accounting / How Demand works

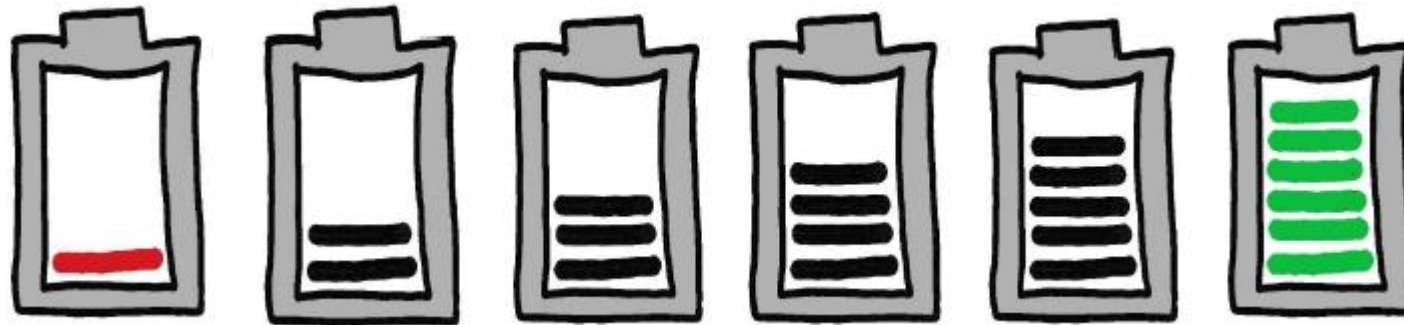
A scenario I've used in the past is this: you and I are both given a bucket and someone keeps pouring in equal amounts of water, this represents demands/anxiety, into each bucket.

Consequently the buckets begin to fill up. The only difference is that your bucket has tiny holes in it so it never reaches the top and spills over unless the water in was to become greater than the water out (this represents interventions).

My bucket doesn't have these holes and so can, therefore, only ever spill over so I must try and reduce the water going in so it doesn't overflow but at some point my bucket will be full and I will go into meltdown. **That is a fact.** It really is a daily balancing act. Some days are better than others. (Julie Daunt)



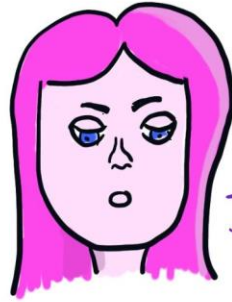
... every day I must make choices on what 'demands' I can cope with. On a bad day that might mean even brushing my teeth is a demand too far. If I am having a bad day I just do what I can and I won't push myself because if I do it will make matters worse. If I'm having a good day then I am able to push myself and I will have a fairly 'normal' day.



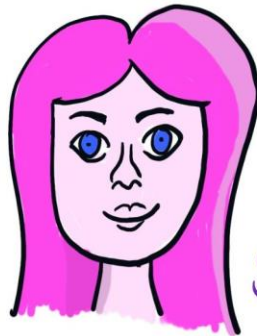
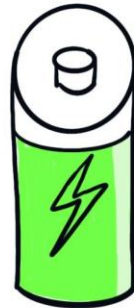
An Energy Accounting Activity - <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/the-energy-accounting-activity-for-autism-3a245e34bdfb>



Energy Accounting



Too much energy out and not enough in is bad. It leads to overload, and exhaustion.



Balancing your energy using energy accounting is good. It leads to feeling regulated, calm and happy.



Lumi Nova

<https://professionals.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/2839/lumi-nova-presentation>

About Lumi Nova

- ▶ Lumi Nova: Tales of Courage is an engaging child-led, parent/guardian supported therapeutic intervention that can be used on most smartphones or tablets.
- ▶ It facilitates **graded exposures (the active ingredient of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) with psychoeducation** to empower 7-12 year olds with mild to moderate needs to learn to **self-manage fears, worries and anxiety**.
- ▶ It is **practical, age appropriate, non-stigmatising, encourages self management** and provides user progress and health outcomes **data in real time** to authorised professionals.



An introduction described Dr Mala Ubhi joins BBC Radio host Nicky Price to share their experience piloting Lumi Nova:

Tales of Courage, a new and award-winning digital therapeutic mobile game for children aged 7 - 12 with mild to moderate anxiety.

The pilot is taking place in Gloucestershire in partnership with NHS Gloucestershire and One Gloucestershire Integrated Care system, providing children and youth with free and easy access therapy for anxiety fear and worries, from the comfort of home.

A NICE recommended and CE registered medical device, Lumi Nova offers a gold standard of care in a fun and non-stigmatising way.



Lumi Nova



Lumi Nova

Lumi Nova: Tales of Courage

A therapeutic digital intervention (game) for childhood anxiety:

- **For 7-12 year olds** (facing difficulties with anxiety)
- **Therapeutic basis: Psychoeducation and Exposure therapy**
- **Embedded outcome measures**
- **Built in safeguarding & accessibility features**
- **Provides data to Authorised Professionals securely through the VitaMind Hub**
- **Available on Android and iOS**
- **Co-created with young people, guardians, teachers, clinicians, academics, game experts.**

Points of use:

- **Early support settings**
- **Self referrals**
- **Point of triaging**
- **Waitlist management**
- **As adjunct to specialist support**
- **To prevent relapse**

Lumi Nova does not require constant clinical supervision.



What is it? (2 mins)



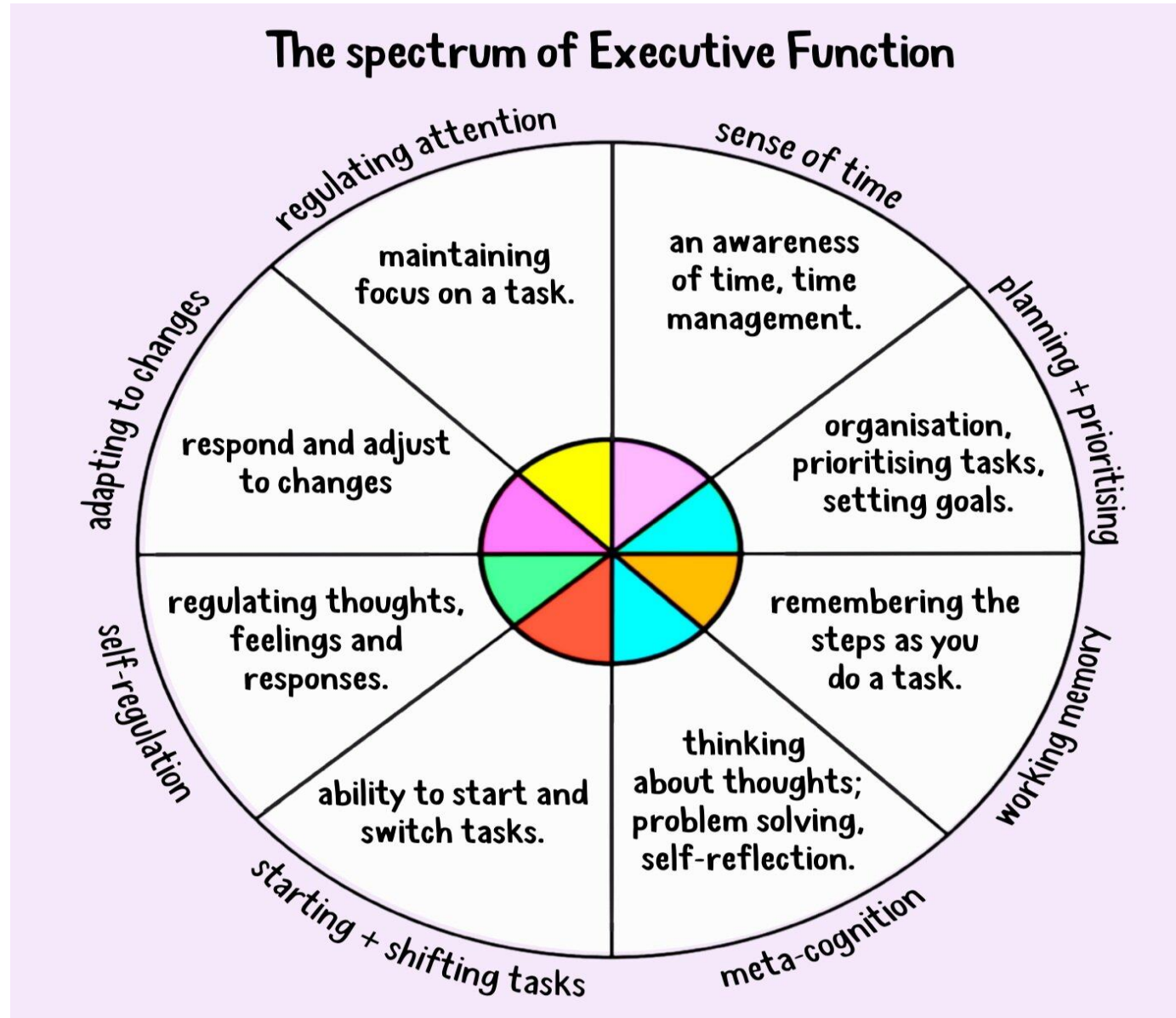
What Do Executive Skill Weaknesses Look Like in class and at home?

Acts without thinking
Interrupts others
Overreacts to small problems
Upset by changes in plans
Talks or plays too loudly
Resists change of routine
Heightened behaviours
Easily overstimulated and has trouble calming down
Gets stuck on one topic or activity

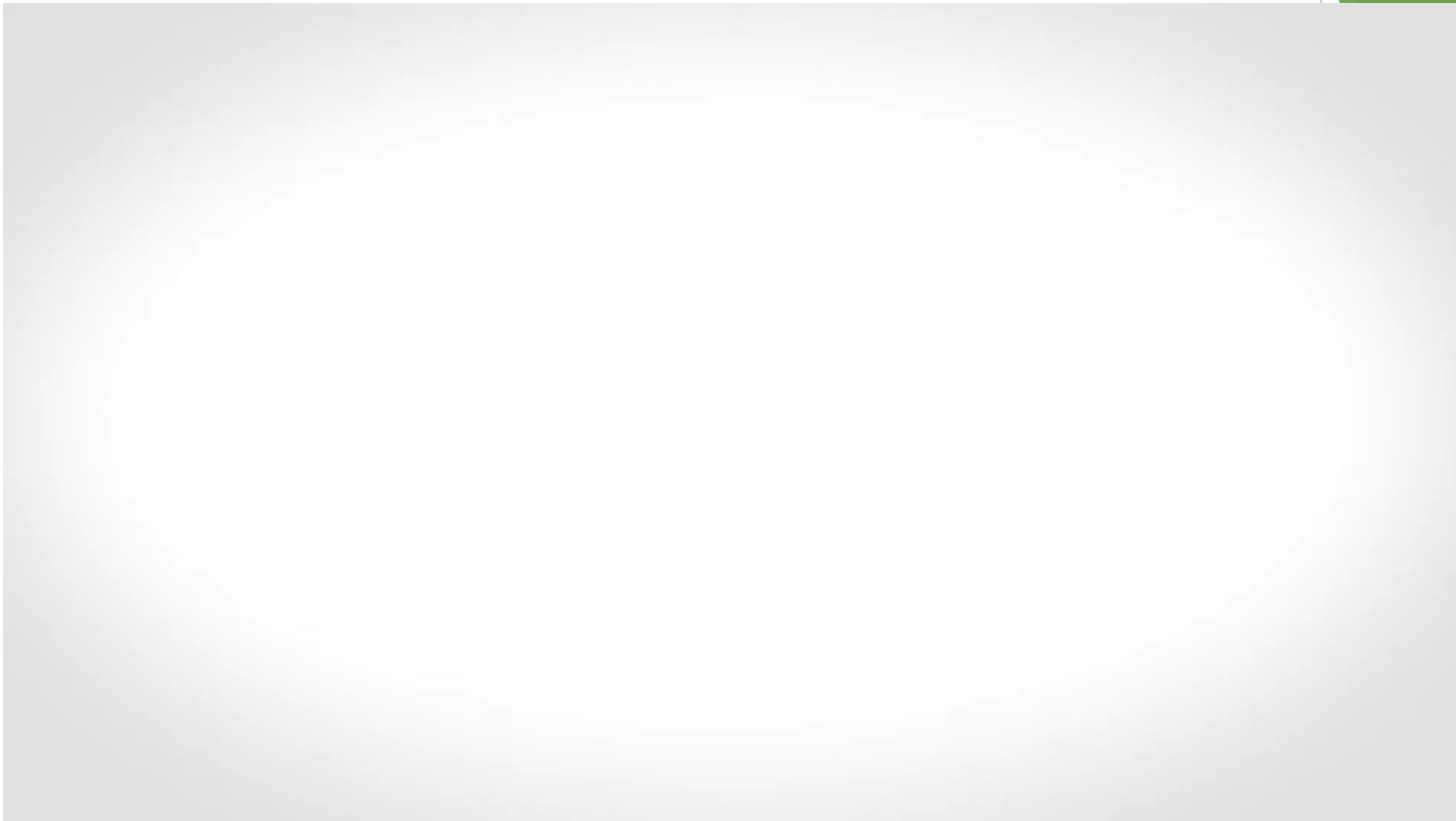
Gets overly upset about "little things"
Out of control more than peers
Low tolerance for frustration
Overwhelmed lots of work
Can't come up with more than one way to solve a problem
Doesn't notice impact of behaviour on others



There's a spectrum - of course



How to help (4mins)



How to Manage Executive Function Differences

Here are some tips from the National Center for Learning Disabilities:

- ▶ Take a step-by-step approach to work.
- ▶ Rely on visual aids to get organised.
- ▶ Use tools like time organisers, computers, or watches with alarms.
- ▶ Make schedules and look at them several times a day.
- ▶ Ask for written and oral instructions whenever possible.
- ▶ Plan for transition times and shifts in activities.



Environment considerations

- ▶ **Establish** classroom routines to address executive skills such as organisation, working memory, planning, time management.
- ▶ **Teach** classroom rules to address executive skills such as response inhibition, emotional control, flexibility--post prominently, review frequently, and practice following the rules.
- ▶ **Establish** class-wide and school-wide monitoring and feedback systems
- ▶ Embed **metacognitive questions** into instruction.

